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REMARKS BY CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES DAVID MEALE “DISASTER RESPONSE EXERCISE AND EXCHANGE (DREE) CLOSING CEREMONY”

**Army Golf Club, Dhaka
September 3, 2015**

Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, (Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief),
Lieutenant General Md. Mainul Islam (Principle Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division),
Major General Gregory Bilton (Deputy Commanding General of United States Army Pacific – North),
Brigadier General Azazul Bar Chowdhury (Director General of Armed Forces Division Directorate of Operations and Plans),
Delegates from the United Kingdom and Burma,
Participants from Bangladesh government organizations,
Participants from International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,
All DREE participants and observers in attendance here today,
Assalam al alikum and a very good afternoon.

On behalf of Ambassador Marcia Bernicat, I want to thank you for inviting me here today to close the most important Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange (DREE) we have ever executed in Bangladesh. I have been paying close attention to the planning and execution of this DREE, and I can say it is the most important because all of us are more prepared for a major earthquake in Dhaka City today than we were yesterday. We should be proud of this progress and success, but with this progress and success comes great responsibility -- responsibility to genuinely and honestly prepare ourselves, our families, our communities and our organizations for a major earthquake in Bangladesh.

As we saw just a few months ago in Nepal, earthquakes are violent, unpredictable, and happen without notice. This joint exercise better prepares us for the inevitable earthquake that will strike Bangladesh. It prepares us for the rigors and stresses that we will face in its aftermath. It inspires us to think not only locally, but nationally, regionally and internationally. It encourages all of us to lead, follow, and learn from our fellow DREE participants, and to ready ourselves to serve others. It calls on all of us to engage critical stakeholders in future DREEs. It prepares Bangladesh to keep its place among the world's best at helping its regional neighbors, and it prepares Bangladesh's partners and neighbors to better assist when disaster strikes. None of this could be done without you.

Looking at today's audience, it is rewarding to see military members from multiple countries joined by a diverse range of representatives from governmental organizations, international organizations, NGOs, and U.S. Embassy representatives. I see a broad coalition of organizations, each with its unique capabilities and skills that, when combined, is greater than the sum of its parts.

In the United States, we use the terms "whole of government," "joint," and "interagency" to describe this phenomenon. This does not limit military agencies working together. Nor does it limit our options to a strictly bilateral approach between the United States and Bangladesh. It is imperative that civil-military cooperation continues to grow in future DREEs, and that regional partners both from the military and from non-military organizations participate in future DREE exercises. It is also crucial that NGOs and international organizations play important roles in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance exercises, because we will all be called into action after a major earthquake happens. Exercises like DREE enhance our ability to understand each other, complement one another's' strengths and limitations, and respond more effectively.

Coinciding with the timing of this DREE exercise, United States and Bangladeshi government and military leaders are preparing for the upcoming Bangladesh-United States Security Dialogue that will be hosted in Washington D.C. on September 11. Ambassador Bernicat is in the United States to attend the Security Dialogue. They will discuss humanitarian assistance and disaster response issues at the highest levels of government, helping to create a clear path forward for our cooperation.

These executive level discussions lay the groundwork for the important work that follows at the working level, by the implementers who make it all happen on the ground...people like you. Your valuable action and input provide information and feedback that in turn help inform our Security Dialogue.

I want to thank you for the formal feedback you provided today in the After Action Review. U.S. Embassy officers and staff will thoroughly review the After Action Review data and use it to improve future disaster response exercises. Next year, we hope to conduct the first of many future regional DREE events, where participants from many countries contribute to an increasingly complex and dynamic set of exercises. Please continue to share your thoughts with us after today so we can press forward in our important and shared efforts. Carry with you the many lessons learned from this important week, and use this knowledge to enhance our collective response to future disasters.

Thank you for your time and participation in the 2015 DREE, and congratulations on the successful completion of a tremendous achievement!

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**As prepared for delivery*